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Editorial: Ban still the right move

Kokomo Tribune Editorial Board

In March, the Howard County Board of Commissioners and Kokomo Common Council voted on the county- and city-wide smoking ban in bars, taverns, private clubs and other places. As we had in previous instances, we advocated for such a change.

“On July 1, Howard County implemented the second part of its broad smoking ban, which includes bars, taverns and private clubs. The smoking ban also incorporates an E-cigarette ban and prohibits smoking at outdoor events, festivals and concerts at city parks,” Tribune reporter George Myers wrote in today’s front page story. “That followed a contentious day, on March 6, when the Howard County Board of Commissioners and Kokomo Common Council passed, one after the other, measures enacting a scheduled county-wide smoking ban with few exceptions. Notably, the legislation was put into effect April 1, except for bars, private clubs and the ordinance’s outdoor seating requirements, which were given until July 1 to come into compliance.”

Now we’re a few months removed from the approval of those decisions, and Myers has taken stock of the reactions from bar owners and workers. As he

wrote, the reaction from the people he spoke with has been varied to say the least.

We certainly sympathize with those like Stella Kling, who owns Stella's Saturday Lounge, and Terri Miller, a bartender for 26 years at Hoosier Bar, who say they have felt a change in their pocketbooks.

Yet, we are encouraged by the accounts of Mario Glunt, the owner of Ned's Corner Pub, and Kirstie Mates, a manager at Mulligan's, who say their businesses have either broken even or increased since the ban.

In the end though, we agree with Shirley Dubois, coordinator of the Howard County Tobacco Coalition, when she said it's too early to reliably measure the full economic impact of the ban. More time will be required to fully sort out that picture.

What we can say with certainty is that the health benefits will be evident. As Howard County Commissioner Paul Wyman has repeatedly pointed out, Howard County is listed in the bottom half of health rankings for Indiana's 92 counties. If we can improve our ranking, the health care savings will more than pay for any lost revenue.